

NSC BRIEFING

16 February 1955

FRENCH CABINET CRISIS

- I. Socialist Premier-Designate Christian Pineau has told President Coty that he will go before the French Assembly on Friday to seek investiture.
- A. Present roster of Pineau's supporters constitutes less than absolute majority.
 - B. Thus, success in investiture depends on abstention of some opponents, which would give him "restricted majority."
 - C. Winning with "restricted majority" now possible under recent Constitutional revision (Dec 54).
 - D. While his government could be overthrown at any time by absolute majority (314), ouster of Mendes (by 319) has put "18 month rule" into effect and seat-hungry delegates will think twice before dumping new premier.
- II. Pineau's prospective support far from solid.
- A. Socialists, Radical bloc and Popular Republicans can muster only 290, even if all back him:
 - 1. Socialists' refusal to forego some of their rigid economic and social program may cost Pineau support of some Radicals.
 - 2. However, Pineau has offered Popular Republicans compromise on divisive church-school issue.
 - B. Gaullists and Overseas Independents (affiliated with Popular Republicans) have rejected bid to join Pineau's cabinet.

1. Possible, however, that they may actively support him on investiture vote (or, at the least, abstain) even though refusing ministerial posts.

III. Should Pineau win, his probable program would include:

- A. Push for favorable Council action on Paris Accords.
- B. Continuation Mendes-France's North African policy.
- C. Support for Vietnamese premier Diem. Could not be expected, however, to make early change in current French policy toward North Vietnam.

IV. Should Pineau fail, next likeliest candidate for investiture will be a Radical Socialist-probably acting Foreign Minister Edgar Faure.

- A. Faure could attract some rightist backing plus Popular Republican support, in addition to basic support Mendes-France depended on.
- B. Would probably have Mendes-France's approval and would follow program similar to his.
 1. Some suspicion that Faure would be susceptible to pressure for delay on Paris agreements.